

## Brownlow, Kellie

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**From:** Brownlow, Kellie  
**Sent:** Friday, July 24, 2015 3:12 PM  
**To:** 'aglennon@ajc.com'; 'kriley@ajc.com'; 'broughton@ajc.com'; 'mrichardson@ajc.com'; 'mwaligore@ajc.com'  
**Subject:** Concerns with Reporter  
**Attachments:** RE: Correction; RE: Correction; RE: Correction; RE: Correction; Re: Correction; RE: AJC questions about Connect Cobb; RE: Ethics; FW: AJC questions about Connect Cobb

Dear AJC leadership team:

I am writing to bring to your attention several correspondences I have had over the last 2 weeks that have raised concerns for me about the accepted professional practices of Dan Klepal. Below is an outline of the circumstances that have led up to my reaching out to you and a summary of my primary concerns. I have also attached each of the referenced emails.

- On Tuesday, July 14, following the Cobb County Board of Commissioners meeting, Dan Klepal approached the dais and asked Chairman Lee to comment on an issue related to campaign finance. Chairman told Dan he had no comment. As Dan proceeded to walk up the steps of the dais toward Chairman Lee a police officer approached to escort the Chairman out. Following this encounter, I walked up to Dan and offered to work with him to get what he needs from the Chairman. He responded with "Oh yeah, about campaign finance?" I responded that as a county employee, this particular topic is out of my purview. He did not follow up with any additional questions.
- On Wednesday, July 15 in Dan Klepal's article regarding updates to the Cobb County ethics code, it was reported that Chairman Lee refused to comment.
- I reached out to Leroy Chapman to explain the circumstance above and request a correction on the story as there was never a question posed to Chairman Lee about ethics.
- Leroy responded promptly and we had a very constructive dialogue about past communications challenges between Mr. Klepal and Chairman Lee. During this conversation, I communicated clearly to Leroy that my job, is to work on behalf of Chairman Lee to make sure he is accessible and that reporters get answers to their questions in a timely manner. We had a good conversation about a "reset" in the relationship and Leroy said he would consider offering a correction to the July 15 story as a show of good faith. Leroy was hoping to arrange some in person communication between the AJC and Chairman Lee.
- Shortly after Leroy and I spoke, Mr. Klepal sent me an email with the "...questions he did not have the opportunity to ask on Tuesday." The email also included a note that Dan was waiting on the Cobb County Transportation Director to answer questions he had posed to her about BRT.
- I answered Dan's questions within 2 hours and, in response to his frustration with the Transportation Director, noted that I am not responsible for communications and media relations outside of the Chairman's office.
- On Monday, July 20, Dan Klepal's article "Study: Transit won't improve traffic" stated "Lee on Tuesday refused to talk to a reporter who approached him to discuss several topics, including BRT."
- I reached out to Leroy to point out that there had not been a question posed to Chairman Lee regarding BRT and again, requested a correction.

- Leroy responded with an explanation that Mr. Klepal had in fact posed questions about BRT to Chairman Lee in an email dated July 15.
- I did find this email in Chairman's inbox. However, it was addressed directly to Faye DiMassimo, Cobb Transportation Director. Chairman Lee was cc'd along with County Manager David Hankerson and AJC editor Todd Duncan. Is this the journalistic standard at the AJC? If you are copied on an email addressed to someone else about something under their purview, are you to assume the question is also being posed to you? If the Chairman was expected to assume that the questions in this email were directed to him, am I to assume that these same questions were also being posed to Todd Duncan and David Hankerson?

On 2 separate occasions, in less than 7 days, Dan Klepal intentionally misrepresented Chairman Lee in his reporting. When corrections were requested, his actions were defended by claims about what he wanted to ask Chairman Lee, but was not given the opportunity, and then by an email not addressed to Chairman Lee but apparently intended for him. At best, this approach to reporting is unprofessional.

I have told Leroy multiple times that I welcome the opportunity to move beyond these challenges. However, I question Dan's willingness to do the same. We are happy to sit down with the AJC, however, we will not do so with Dan Klepal present. He has proven to be unprofessional in his communications and inaccurate in his reporting. With this said, please let me know if you want to arrange an interview with others at the AJC.

Thank you in advance for your attention to my concerns. I look forward to hearing from you.

Respectfully,

Kellie Brownlow

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